

Testimony before the Appropriations Committee
February 23, 2017
Leah Lucarelli, DNP, APRN, FNP-C, Middletown, CT

Good afternoon Senator Osten, Senator Formica, Representative Walker, Senator Gerratana, Representative Dillon, Senator Somers, and members of the Appropriations Committee. My name is Leah Lucarelli and I am a School Based Nurse Practitioner with Community Health Center in Middletown. I am providing testify on H.B. No. 7027, An Act Concerning the State Budget for the Biennium Ending June 30, 2019.

Every child deserves a chance to be healthy and to reach their full potential in life. But many children have health problems that make it difficult for them to learn and succeed. We want young people in CT to be healthy and thriving. School based health centers help young people with their mental health problems, their physical health problems, or their oral health problems. To illustrate this with a real patient, I want to share the school based health center experience of my patient Alana. I have discussed this with her mother who agreed to her participation in this testimony.

I started seeing Alana when she was in Kindergarten. She would miss multiple days of school and come to the school based health center six to eight times each month with frequent ear and throat infections and asthma flares. She did not have health insurance so her parents would not take her to her pediatrician or local emergency room for fear of the medical bills. With the help of our access to care department, we were able to get her covered by HUSKY insurance. We coordinated referrals to Ear/Nose/Throat specialists at CCMC where she eventually had ear tubes placed and her tonsils removed.

The frequency of infection drastically diminished and Alana is able to attend school on a regular basis and focus on her work instead of on her poor health. She is now in 4th grade and has well controlled asthma and has not been on antibiotics in over 6 months for an infection. Without the school based health center, I'm not sure Alana would be as healthy and successful as she is today.

Please maintain funding to School Based Health Centers in our state so that young people such as Alana can continue to thrive and stay in school. This is critical to their future. Thank you for supporting School Based Health Centers.